



State of Idaho
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER
Governor

DAVID R. TUTHILL, JR.
Director

January 11, 2009

Honorable Wendy Jaquet
House of Representatives
Capitol Building
Boise, Idaho 83720

RE: Water Management in the Big Wood and Little Wood River Basins

Dear Representative Jaquet:

Thank you for your interest in water management issues in the Big Wood and Little Wood River Basins, Water District Nos. 37 & 37M. I am in receipt of your inquiry dated December 4, 2008, and will clarify aspects of the letter and respond to the questions you have posed.

As a way to provide you with full information in this regard, I am including as attachments a letter from Mr. Jerry Nance, Vice-Chairman of Water Districts Nos. 37 & 37M dated October 29, 2008, and my response dated today. Mr. Nance's letter provides a detailed description of the meeting held October 10, 2008, and my response clarifies some of the issues and brings our view of water management in the Big Wood and Little Wood River Basins up to date. As you are aware, the past two months have included much discussion and analysis relative to funding, and my response to Mr. Nance identifies some of the impacts of recent funding reductions.

In your letter, you indicate that "it may be possible that USGS can provide the necessary input data for IDWR to model this basin so that groundwater, surface water and tributary streams can all be managed conjunctively, all without the help of a Brockway/Old Cutters study." I fully agree that the work that is being conducted by the USGS is helpful. However, the USGS is not constructing a ground water model in this area. Also, the purpose of the Brockway model is not to provide a comprehensive model for conjunctive administration in the basin. Such a model is a much larger task than the Brockway model. Instead, the Brockway model is being prepared to provide for the analysis of certain proposed water right transfers. The conjunctive administration model will be much more comprehensive and detailed, including the USGS data and much additional effort. The Brockway model is but a stepping stone toward this effort, and while small is a valuable and important contribution.

The three primary questions of your letter are addressed as follows:

1. Confirm the information in items 1 through 4 of your letter.

Yes, we rely on USGS data that have been and will be gathered, and see the USGS as partners in developing the data needed for upcoming modeling efforts. I concur with items 1 through 4 of your letter.

2. Is and will the Wood River basin remain in the number two position?

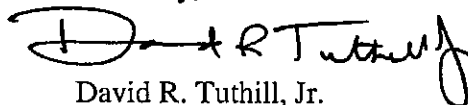
As described in the attached response to Mr. Nance, the Palouse Basin and the Wood River Basin remain in the number two position. I am not aware of any movement to alter this prioritization.

3. Will the USGS study give us the data we need to model this basin for needed conjunctive administration?

Developing a model that is sufficiently defensible to serve as the basis to regulate ground water diversions is a significant, multi-year effort. We are heading down the road to make this happen. If funding is restored for the aquifer planning process in FY2011 to enable us to move forward with this basin, I anticipate that we will develop the model as part of the aquifer planning process.

Representative Jaquet, as I indicated to Mr. Nance, the fact that you and others in this basin continue to express interest in water management of the basin is the cause of the high priority of the basin and will continue to provide impetus in the move toward conjunctive administration in the basin. The road toward fair and equitable conjunctive administration is not simple – it is long, arduous and costly. What we are contemplating is the potential to curtail very valuable ground water rights that have never heretofore been regulated. As you appreciate this is a very serious action that requires solid technical and legal basis. While we are taking steady steps in this direction it will require years of effort for full implementation. My staff and I want to continue to meet with water users, legislators, and other interested parties in this regard. Please advise if you wish to arrange a follow-up to this correspondence.

Sincerely,



David R. Tuthill, Jr.
Director

Attachments:

- Letter from Mr. Jerry Nance, Vice Chairman of Water Districts Nos. 37 & 37M dated October 29, 2008
- Reply to Mr. Nance dated January 11, 2009



House of Representatives
STATE OF IDAHO
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DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

David R. Tuthill

Director, Idaho Department of Water Resources

P.O. Box 83720

Boise, ID 83720-0098

December 4, 2008

Dear Director Tuthill:

In early October you met with Senator Clint Stennett and representatives of water districts 37 and 37M to discuss concerns arising out of the need for expedited water management. You indicated that the department is moving toward this goal as quickly as possible. You assure the group that the Big Wood is now number two in priority. We are grateful for that designation.

You also indicated that a model is needed for water management. In conversations following the above meeting as well as one that was held in the community, concerns were raised about "fast tracking" the model development when work was to be done by combining modeling done in the 1970's with updates from the Old Cutters modeling. Wendy Pabich was asked to follow up with Jim Bartolino of the USGS to determine the status of the Wood River study. He indicated that the final results of part two of the study, which documents a water budget for the watershed, should be out by December. In addition, he confirmed that:

1. This water budget data will provide much of the input data necessary to create a groundwater model for the basin,
2. He worked with Allen Wylie at IDWR on the Spokane-Rathdrum model and gives Wylie very high marks,

3. He has been involved in discussions with IDWR and others about the recently allocated funds for Modeling in the state and is helping to move the Wood River basin modeling along, and
4. The next phase of the USGS study will focus on refining data necessary to characterize the Aquifer; this data will also be helpful in a groundwater model.

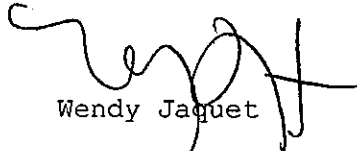
Based on this information, it may be possible that USGS can provide the necessary input data for IDWR to model this basin so that groundwater, surface water and tributary streams can all be managed conjunctively, all without the help of a Brockway/Old Cutters study.

We are now in December and I am asking that you confirm the above: Is and will the Wood River basin remain in the number two position? And, do you agree that the USGS study will give you the data you need to model this basin so we can have the conjunctive management that is necessary.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Season's greetings and a very happy new year to you.

Warmest regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wendy Jaquet', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Wendy Jaquet

Representative